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Castles surprised, great cities sacked and brent;  
So mak'st thou kings and gainest wrongful government.

Most wretched man,  
That to affections does the bridle lend.  
In their beginning they are weak and wan,  
But soon through suffrance grow to fearful end:  
Whiles they are weak betimes with them contend:  
For when they once to perfect strength do grow,  
Strong wars they make and cruel battry bend  
Gainst fort of Reason, it to overthrow;  
Wrath, jealousy, grief, love, this Squire had laid thus low."

With this splendid energy of conception, human and moral in our eas, such as Byron, with all his power of depicting lawless sublimity, with all his command of passionate thought and of choice diction, was incapable of, we will now conclude.

J. KINDON.

MANCHESTER.

## BOOK REVIEWS.

PRINCIPIA ETHICA. By George Edward Moore, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1903. Pp. xxvii, 232.

Though this is quite a short book, there can be little doubt that it is one of the most important works on Ethics that have been published in recent times. Its importance is due mainly to the extraordinary clearness with which some leading conceptions are discussed. Whatever may be thought of its results, it is certainly a model of philosophical method and lucid exposition.

Mr. Moore takes as his motto the saying of Bishop Butler—"Everything is what it is, and not another thing." His main contention is that Good—the fundamental conception of Ethics—is unanalysable, and consequently indefinable. We can no more say what we mean by it, in terms of anything else, than we can in the case of a particular color, such as yellow. Yellow is yellow, and good is good; neither of them is resolvable into anything else. Hence Mr. Moore urges that almost all ethical writers have gone astray at the very outset of their inquiries; Vol. XIV—No. 3

since almost all have made some attempt to define what good is. The most conspicuous cases of this mistake are those in which an attempt is made to identify good with some particular experience—*e. g.*, pleasure. This Mr. Moore calls the naturalistic fallacy. It is a very bad mistake; because we find, when we consider it, that good is not a particular experience, but rather a universal determination, like number. The more metaphysical writers on Ethics have generally been free from this blunder, but still they have nearly always attempted to show that good is something other than itself, and in this way have gone nearly as far astray as the naturalists.

Mr. Moore's view on this point is enforced by trenchant criticisms of Herbert Spencer, J. S. Mill, Green and his school, and others. Most of the points emphasized by Mr. Moore have already been brought out by other critics, but perhaps never so tersely and so clearly. The points against Mill in particular have probably never before been so thoroughly pressed home. Here, at least, his statements may well be accepted as the last word on the subject. His criticisms on the more metaphysical writers are also keen; but, naturally enough (as I happen to be one of those brought under the lash), they do not seem to me equally conclusive.

In contrast with these writers, Sidgwick is especially commended for his insistence on the independence of the conceptions expressed by the terms "Good," and "ought"; and one gathers from the preface that Mr. Moore finds himself still more closely in harmony with Franz Brentano on the general foundations of Ethics.

While, however, Mr. Moore maintains most emphatically that Good is indefinable, he is equally explicit in the contention that it is quite possible to give an account of *the* Good; and the latter part of his book is occupied with an attempt to set forth the nature of the chief objects to which the term can be strictly applied. Mr. Moore thinks that most previous writers have failed in their quest for such objects, owing to the fact that they have defined Good in a particular way, and have regarded nothing as being included in the Good except what answers to the definition that is put forward. But even Sidgwick, though he abstains from defining Good, falls into the same sort of error when he seeks to explain what the ultimate Good is. He also endeavors to show that only one kind of object—*viz.*, pleasure—

can be accepted as a Good. Mr. Moore urges that there is no real ground for such exclusiveness, and even that pleasure, by itself, cannot be accepted as a complete Good at all. Further inquiry brings out the fact that the chief positive goods are personal affection and æsthetic enjoyment. Mr. Moore urges further that, though pleasure is not in itself a good, pain is an evil, and that, though knowledge is not in itself a good, it is an essential constituent in most great goods.

One of the most interesting incidental points in Mr. Moore's treatment is his conception of organic unity, which he explains in a striking and original way, and which he appears to regard as one of the points in which his general view is most definitely marked off from those of Sidgwick and Brentano. He considers that the idea of organic unity that has been put forward by recent writers is in some important respects confused. In particular, an organic whole has generally been understood to mean a whole of such a kind that a part of it has "no meaning or significance apart from its whole." "This doctrine," says Mr. Moore (p. 34), "must be utterly rejected. It implies itself that the statement 'This is a part of that whole' has a meaning; and in order that this may have one, both subject and predicate must have a distinct meaning." Rejecting this view of organic unity, Mr. Moore defines an organic whole as one that has a value different from the sum of the values of its parts; and of the conception, as thus defined, he makes very considerable use in the latter parts of his discussion.<sup>1</sup>

Now, it appears to the present reviewer that it is just at this point that both the strength and the weakness of Mr. Moore's position are to be found. The strength of his work lies here; it appears to be by means of this conception of organic unity that he has been able to get beyond the point of view of Sidgwick, with whom otherwise he has much in common. The value of things for Sidgwick, it seems fair to say, is simply the sum of those elements into which they can be resolved by analysis. Mr. Moore sees clearly that in many cases a real whole

<sup>1</sup> As I appear to be one of the group of writers to whom Mr. Moore is referring in the above criticism, and as he definitely mentions me at a later point as a representative of that school, I may perhaps be allowed to state that I am not aware of having ever said that in an organic unity the part has "no meaning or significance apart from the whole." In my "Introduction to Social Philosophy," I have discussed the conception at some length; but none of my statements, as far as I can see, amounts to this.

has a value that cannot be thus split up. But, on the other hand, the weakness of his position lies in this, that he regards this peculiarity of some real wholes as being found only in their relation to the idea of value. He does not recognize that a whole may, in other respects also, mean and be something more than the sum of its parts.

Now, this is a matter of considerable importance in its bearing on Mr. Moore's view of definition, which, by the bye, appears to be substantially that of J. S. Mill. Mr. Moore seems to think that we define a whole by analysing it into its constituent parts, and that what is not thus analysable is necessarily indefinable. But if there are such things as organic unities, an unanalysable part might be capable of definition with reference to the whole—*i. e.*, it might be defined by pointing out its place within the organism. Even yellow would seem to be definable in this way. For I suppose even Mr. Moore would admit that we are justified in saying that yellow is a color; and if we go on to add that it is the color that comes between red and green in the scale of pure color qualities, I do not see why this should not be regarded as a definition. No doubt yellow, as it exists apart from all reference to other colors, would not thus be defined. But yellow thus conceived is hardly the yellow that anyone would wish to define. Definitions have no meaning except for a thinking consciousness, and for a thinking consciousness at least yellow is a part or aspect of the color continuum.<sup>2</sup>

Now, Good could surely be defined in a somewhat similar way. We can connect it with conation, just as we can connect yellow with the scale of colors. Mr. Moore is probably right enough in objecting to most of the attempts that have been made to define Good in terms of Will or Desire; yet, if all reference to these were omitted, it may be doubted whether Good would retain any meaning for us at all. I am inclined to think that Mr. Moore begins at the wrong end in trying to understand the meaning of Good. He begins by thinking of

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<sup>2</sup> It should be particularly noted that Mr. Moore, like J. S. Mill, appears to regard all definitions as nominal. When any one tries to define Good, Mr. Moore conceives that he is setting forth what he intends the term to mean. But surely most people who have defined Good—even Mill himself—have rather been trying to point out the essential characteristics of an aspect of experience which, in the concrete, they have assumed to be well enough known. They have been attempting, in short, to arrive at a real definition, and not merely to fix the meaning of a word.

the Good as that which has absolute value; but it is pretty certain that the original meaning of the Good in human experience is one that is distinctly relative. What is good is, in the first instance, what is good for something or other. It is only by after-reflection that we come to recognize that such mediate goods must have reference to some end to which they are means; and so we are led gradually to the conception of some Good which is not a means, but is valued purely in and for itself. What is good thus signifies, first of all, a means to some desired or desirable end, and afterwards some ultimate end involved or presupposed in desire. There are thus two meanings of Good, both connected, directly or indirectly, with desire, and both capable of being defined in relation to desire. It is no doubt wrong to say simply that Good is what is desired or willed; it might be truer to characterize it as the objective counterpart of desire or will, or as that which would satisfy desire. It is difficult to see how it could have any meaning for us at all apart from some such reference to conation.

Another point that appears doubtful in Mr. Moore's theory is his distinction between pleasure and consciousness of pleasure. It is no doubt true to say that we can distinguish what we mean by truth, and other objective contents, from the subjective part of their appearance in consciousness; and Mr. Moore deserves considerable praise for his insistence on this point, both here and in a recent article in "*Mind*." But can this be applied to the case of pleasure? Is not pleasure purely subjective? Does it *mean* for us anything more than it is as a simple fact of experience? There are, I think, several indications that Mr. Moore, while rightly emphasizing the antithesis between the subjective and the objective, has not sufficiently thought out the relations between the two.

Mr. Moore's criticism of metaphysical conceptions, as applied to Ethics, is also unsatisfactory. He complains—somewhat after the manner of Aristotle—that the metaphysical Good is eternal, and consequently throws no light on good as realized by human effort; but rather makes the latter unmeaning. This is true of some metaphysical conceptions, but not of all. According to some, what is eternal involves a process. In a sense, the nature of a tree is eternal; but this does not prevent trees from growing, nor does it enable them to grow into the skies. It is hardly necessary, however, to dwell on this; nor have we space to do

so to any purpose here. It may suffice to say that the only real difference between Mr. Moore and the metaphysicians seems to lie in his contention that Good cannot be defined. If once he recognized that it could be defined, it may be taken as certain that his definition would lead him into metaphysics; and, once he got well launched into that kind of speculation, one may well feel convinced that he would not lack the necessary ingenuity to get over the difficulty about eternity. Even as it is, his criticisms appear to be valid against the statements of many metaphysical writers.

A comparatively small point may be noticed in conclusion. We have seen that Mr. Moore calls attention to a certain want of parallelism between pain and pleasure in their relations to evil and good respectively. But surely it ought by this time to be recognized, by all who deal with psychological questions, that pain is not the opposite of pleasure. Pain seems clearly to be a special mode of organic sensation, which has no real opposite. Pleasure, on the other hand, means simply agreeable feeling, and its opposite is disagreeable feeling. If this were fully borne in mind by writers on Ethics, it would help to remove many troublesome paradoxes. In connection with this point, Mr. Moore rightly enough remarks that philosophers must not attempt to force an artificial symmetry. At the same time, philosophers must try to get an intelligible view of experience; and any arbitrary lack of symmetry undoubtedly interferes with this.

On the whole, it must, I think, be said that Mr. Moore's book is not free from blots. While we may accept Butler's saying that "Everything is what it is, and not another thing," we are probably justified in adding that it is never altogether without reference to another thing, and that it can seldom be properly understood without considering that reference. But we have much reason to be grateful to Mr. Moore for his keen criticisms; and even his more constructive efforts are full of stimulus and suggestion. Certainly every one who cares for Ethics ought to read his book.

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